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# SOFT HOUR

May 2017



## **Editor's Preface**

The writing collection in *Soft Hour* was written by my Father during his sunset years. Father's writings represent his character and thinking. He is a very successful example, a great father, and a patient mentor.

Father is a charitable person. He deeply believes in education and is a master of time management. Most importantly, father lives a simple life, has a never give up approach to life, wisdom and financial management.

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2017



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## Early Morning

We must have sufficient sleep, especially the old people. They have ample time to sleep, but they cannot sleep well in the night, they can only close their eyes and lie in bed to rest. Is it good for them?

This question is worthy of studying. It is true that if we lie in bed, we can have enough rest, but too much rest is harmful to our body. We all know that streaming water is clean water we can drink due to its constant motion. It is the same with our blood circulation. Only good blood circulation can be healthy to our body, slow circulation not.

To old people, it is necessary to get up early in the morning. Early morning is important to everybody, but especially to old people. It is because their living days are not long. They have to seize time to enjoy their early morning hours during their sunset life.

Early morning is the beginning of our day. Therefore, we must appreciate early morning hours, to plan what we should do this day, to do anything deeply, not to waste the day that is in our hands. If you still lie in bed while the sun is high in the sky, you will not be a man of success. You must be an early bird, which catches worms easily. Success belongs to those who get up early and start working early. Everything in this world is under competition, failing which and you will be wiped out from human society.

## Beautiful Evening Sun

“Evening sun is beautiful, but it is near night.” This is a popular poem in China, even a schoolboy can recite this poem. The meaning is very clear, pointing out that an old man, in spite of the fact that he has a good, golden life at his old age, still goes slowly to the end of his life.

Everybody will get old, but to old people, it is most helpless and painful. It is due to that many old people cannot take care of themselves and have to depend on others to live their daily life. Such life is not a happy one. Much pride will be lost, and much pain will be suffered in their daily life. Only they know the pain, in their heart, by themselves.

Unless you are a very healthy old man, and you do not need anyone to help you, then your life will be comparatively happier. But such old people are very few, because one day you will be sick, and you will have to depend on others as a necessity.

There are many kinds of sickness facing old people, such as heart attack, high blood pressure, cancer, and so on, plus many small illnesses, such as deaf ear, lost eyesight, hunchback and stooping, and the need for support while walking. These troubles are common to old people.

Since we cannot stop the coming of evening sun, we shall then enjoy our life before evening sun go down. That is to use every minute happily for our everyday life, to enjoy whatever we wish.

## **Against Our Wish**

We all hope that every day, everything will run smoothly according to our wish, but in reality, things do not always go as well as we wish them to be. Instead, troubles fall upon us frequently. Therefore, we have to prepare psychologically to face anything that can give us trouble.

Many times, things that we think are definitely going to be successful, turn out to be failures in the end. It is out of our expectation and planning, and gives us disappointment.

To do anything, it is better to hope for the best, but prepare for the worst. If such philosophy is formed, failure is not important to us. After we have failed, we shall start anew to get another new success, never abandon to try again.

In this world, if we have preparation for failure, our chance to be successful is higher. But if you do not prepare, you will lose the confidence to try again. Many successful people, through countless failures, finally reached the gate of success and glory. It is because they have a spirit of persistence, never to give in, never to surrender, only going forward to the goal they set at the beginning of their journey.

Actually, in our life, as long as we do our best, success and failure are not important. How can we have everything perfect when the fact is that life is not perfect?

## Poor and Rich

If a person has no money, he is poor, and he is rich if he has money. The definition is very clear. But, the question is what is the difference of personalities between the poor and the rich. It is obvious that finance wise, the poor has lower reputation and the rich higher. For instance, banks only trust the rich and not the poor. It is the reality and no one can twist this situation.

Basically, a few poor people, in order to get easy money, will break the law to do something illegal, which most rich people will not. That is why prisoners in jails are mostly poor people and fewer rich people. Therefore, we should try our best not to be poor, but to be away from poor. We need to work hard, to manage our finance well, that is to spend less than our income.

However, some countries become rich because of their geography. In the Middle East, oil will appear from the ground. People there are rich even though they do not work. Government will give them a certain amount of money every month to let them live comfortably. But people who live in the high mountains cannot have a good life from geographic point of view. What they have are only trees and animals, which are merely enough to support their daily living.

## **Wipe Out the Weak**

The cycle of nature is to wipe out the weak, with the strongest remain, especially in the life of animals. It is so clear that in animal's world only strong animals survive. We do not see weak animals in animal's society.

Many weak animals die in wintertime, unable to resist the severe cold and snow. Still, many strong animals survive through the winter, even without plenty of food. It is because they eat the bodies of dead animals, which are the sources of food letting the remaining animals survive.

In our human life, we also wipe out the weak and let the strong control our society. It is not a question of life and death, but the division of high class and low class in society. The strong controls high society and the weak remains in low society. To say it simply, the strong becomes rich and the weak becomes poor.

Therefore, we must not be weak, but to be strong. You need good foundation in education, to get knowledge and wisdom by which you can then have a chance to become strong. As long as you have determination to be a strong person, go forward and never give up in spite of huge difficulties lying ahead of you. One day, you will surely be rewarded for the hard work and effort you have invested during the past years. God will help those who help themselves. You are the one to have God's grace.

## Beware Your Mouth

Two old friends are together, talking very amicably, but one friend says something which hurt the other friend's pride. As a consequence, their friendship comes to an end, treating each other as strangers from that moment on.

Such thing happen frequently, therefore we must be very careful to control our mouth, say only what we need to say, avoid improper words which may hurt the listener's pride.

For young men, saying improper words is not important as they always speak carelessly to each other. They do not mind if someone says rude words to each other, thinking it as only a joke.

But, when you speak to middle aged men, words should be prudent, or you may get into trouble afterwards. If your words hurt their pride, they will remember in their heart what you have said and wait for the opportunity to get revenge on you.

The old Chinese saying: "Disaster is from words we speak, illness is from food into our mouth." Therefore, we should listen more, and speak less, since we have one mouth and two ears.

Why we love dogs deeply is because they can only listen, but not speak. We do not fear that dogs will hurt us. We only fear human who may, at any time, hurt us from behind. To protect ourselves is to speak carefully at any time in any circumstances.

## Tolerance

Sometimes we are not happy because many people take advantage of us. It is also true that we sometimes wish to take advantage of others. In most cases, we will suffer losses if we want to take advantage of others. It is therefore better to keep a principle of not taking any benefit from anybody. We will then put ourselves in a safe position upon which no one can inflict harm on us.

But still, there are many people who will hurt us without any reason, which make us feel unbearable in our sentiment. What shall we do? Maybe it is better to tolerate than to hate and to get revenge. To say is easy, but to do is difficult. However, considering that in our life, we have so many things to do, but time is always not enough. Therefore, to hate or to get revenge is really a waste of our life. It may be against our character, but it is still better to tolerate to let us have time to enjoy our life in whatever way we like.

If we can tolerate, it is proof that we are powerful. Only a powerful person can have a heart of tolerance. Make yourself powerful first and then you can be a person of tolerance.

A simple way to prevent others from hurting us is to keep a certain distance with people. With a distance curtain, others can have less chance to hurt us.

## Crisis

When we hear in the market that one big enterprise is in crisis, we will immediately think that this company is in financial trouble. It may suffer big loss in their trading and unable to meet payments that are due. This shows that this company is in trouble.

But, in most cases after a crisis, there is opportunity which will turn failure into success. Of course, this is entirely dependent on the person to change from crisis into opportunity. This is the moment that let a person show his talent or ignorance in the affairs he faces.

However, we must not give up in our struggle even if we have failed. Nothing is easy in anything if we do not fight. We must persist to go forward, against any difficulty that lies ahead of us, especially when we have reached the goal of success; we must continue to be vigilant which, if neglected, will always lead us to failure.

Therefore, when we are in good time, we should prepare for evil wind that may blow our way. If we are prepared beforehand, nothing can hurt us at any time during bad weather.

Crisis in our health is illness; crisis in business is financial trouble and crisis in marriage is sentiment problem. No matter what position we are in, we must handle it carefully to change our ill position into good direction. This is the duty in our life.

## **Tree Root**

When we enter a forest, we can see many huge trees. They stand firmly on the ground, no storm or rain can push them down. Why are they so strong? It is because their roots are deeply under the ground. Therefore, roots are the life of a tree, without which, a tree cannot survive. The roots may go down one hundred feet deep and more than one hundred feet away in distance. As long as the soil has water to nourish them, the roots will extend farther and farther without boundary.

We are human and in our life, we also need roots to keep our life alive. We do not need soil, but we need time, which to us human is the same as soil is to tree. Our roots are thinking, education, and philosophy to handle our life. If our roots are good and strong, our whole life will be happy and comfortable, or if not, we will have trouble and disaster in the course of our life.

Where are our roots? Our roots are in the books from which we can learn many things, essential to be in use in our life. Books are the recorded experience of our ancestors, who recorded their success and failure to pass down their knowledge to us. By reading those books, we can learn the ways of their success and avoid the ways of their failure. If you do not read books, you will be ignorant and unable to deal with any problem which may fall upon you. Without education you cannot grow, and easily fall down when you meet troubles and disasters.

## Food

Regardless of whether humans or animals, food is needed every day. Without food, we shall have no strength to work and our body will be weak, thus causing many kinds of illness in our body. It is common knowledge that everyone knows.

Animals spend their entire life looking for food. Grass eating animals are looking for grassland wherever they live. When they have finished eating the grass in the place they live, they have to migrate to another place for new grass. Meat eating animals also are looking for weak animals as their food. It is the cycle of nature.

The duty of government in every country is to keep ample supply of food available in famine years, or the country may face a revolution if people have nothing to eat. In ancient China, kings worshiped God every year, praying for good weather to help harvest and prevent famine.

During time of peace, food is usually plentiful. People have stable jobs and life is comfortable. But at time of war, people are homeless, and no one will work on the field. Consequently, food become scarce and prices high, thus causing most people to live in hunger.

Our stomach is limited, we cannot eat three days' worth of food in one day, we have to eat every day to stay alive. Even with today's advanced medical development, we have not invent a pill that would make us not hungry by just eating one pill. We still have to eat rice and vegetable to keep our stomach full to live on.

## Politeness

If we are polite and have good manners, we can go anywhere smoothly. But, if our manners are rude, we shall meet rough treatment from others. It is a rule that if we wish to have happiness, we need to be polite and have good manners all the time.

Politeness costs you nothing, but the power is great. It is because every human wishes to be treated with politeness by other human. No human likes to talk to a person of rudeness.

Politeness is not only for your superior or for strangers, you must also be polite to your family members, or even to a dog. You can enjoy a harmonious atmosphere at home by being polite, and a dog will wag its tail to show thankfulness.

Many young men, because of their rude manners, create chance to fight and as a result, they may wound other persons or they may be wounded by other people. Both are not good to them. If you wound others, you break the law and may go to jail, or if you are wounded, you will lie in hospital and may be crippled. It is because they do not observe politeness.

When we get up in the morning and leave home for work, do not forget to bring the word “politeness” with us. With this word, you can go anywhere smoothly. Because the meaning of “politeness” is “softness”. Softness is the best philosophy in our life. Water is soft and we all know that water is the strongest thing in the world.

## Tiny Grass, the Strongest

Many years ago, a great number of scientists gathered together, discussing which is the strongest amongst animals and plants. A lot of scientists think lion is the strongest, but many others insist that tiny grass is the strong one. It came to a vote. The result is tiny grass was voted as the strongest.

The theory is, if you burn the grass on the ground or have a tank run over a grass field, the tiny grass will be burned to ash by the fire or be flattened by the force of a tank. But, the next day you will find the destroyed grass come to life again as if nothing had happened the previous day. Why? It is because the roots of the tiny grass are in the soil, which protected the roots.

When storm comes, big trees are blown down to the ground, but tiny grass remains safe. It just bends its body down and when the storm is over, it rises again. The life of tiny grass is forever.

We frequently see tiny grass appears from cracks in stones, which have very little space and are tough and rigid. But the grass has the power to break through the cracks in the stone. Its power is great.

Therefore, in our life, we should be like a tiny grass, to survive under any severe conditions. That is, to put root of our life into the depth of our heart. We should be like water, which is soft in appearance but so strong that nothing can resist it.

## Twenty Four Hours

We live our whole life in the cycle of twenty four hours, day by day, month by month, and year by year. Slowly and slowly, we come to our old age and then fade away. Everybody has the same fate.

Sun is the master of twenty four hours. When the sun rises in the morning, it indicates the start of the day. Previous twenty four hours are gone and will never come back. We have to live in the coming twenty four hours.

The sun is shining brightly every day, and such shining will last forever, everlasting. Even after one hundred years, sunshine is the same as today.

But us humans are different. Our twenty four hours has an end. Today we are as strong as a bull, but after one hundred years, we will be only a dead body, buried under the ground.

We cannot stop the passage of time. What we can do is to do things that we have to do in the course of time, and to enjoy what we like to enjoy. Whatever achievement we have done, it is the accumulation of hard work of twenty four hours. Rome was not built in one day, it was built by many, many twenty four hours.

Therefore, we should fully use our twenty four hours wisely after the sun rises. Keep persistence to do things once we have set the goal. There is nothing difficult in this world if we keep a spirit of persistence.

## Time

Time slips away so quickly and silently. Time goes on second by second, never stopping. If you do not seize time to use for your own benefit, you shall never achieve anything in your life, regretting forever. Therefore, to use time wisely is the most important of the importance.

But how to seize time! First is to set up a timetable upon which we shall do things step by step according to the plan, which we intend to fulfill for the goal of our life.

In one occasion, there were two men both forty years old. They took a photo together, but in the photo we see one man looked like a thirty five years old and the other looked like over forty five years old. Why is it like this? It is because the younger looking man lived a very decent life, up early and early to bed, sufficient exercise, balanced diet, no smoking and no drinking alcohol. Except work, he had no nightlife, which kept him at the stage of a young man. But, the other one is different. This man lived a crazy life, drinking and smoking every day, sleeping late because of nightlife, which sped him to get old quickly, looking like a man who is nearly fifty.

We all have good hopes for our life. But to make idea into reality, we need to seize time, to be master of time, not a slave. We should control time, to use it for the goal of our whole life.

## Managing Finance

If you know how to manage money, whether you have big money or small money, you will always have money in surplus. The principle of managing finance is to keep your money once you have made it. You shall not lose it and shall never be cheated by others. You need wisdom to keep money forever in your hands.

No book can teach you how to manage money. If the author knows how to manage money, he will surely be a rich person. Once he is rich, he will not labor himself to write for income. Therefore, you have to think by yourself how to handle money and keep money forever in your control.

Managing finance is a very private knowledge to everyone. But, to manage money you need a certain amount of money in your hands. If you are poor, you have no money to manage.

How can we have money? It is necessary to build a habit of making more money and spending less. Slowly and slowly, you will accumulate your wealth. When such time comes, you must be very careful to manage your wealth. If you are a man of talent in managing money, you will surely one day be a very rich person.

The absolute rule to managing money is that you shall not have liability in your personal expense. You can only borrow money from bank for business. Make a balance sheet of your own so that you can know your net worth at any time.

## Wisdom

There is no specific book in the market for us to buy to learn wisdom. Nobody writes a book that can teach a person how to have wisdom. We have to learn wisdom by ourselves, to read various books, especially history books, which are the basic source of wisdom, and from the society we live in.

Wisdom and smart are different. Smart man only wishes to take advantage of other people in everything and in every occasion. Most smart men are shortsighted, but man of wisdom is different. He looks at things far and forward, planning for big benefit in the future, caring nothing for small profit today.

For example, two young men whose family background are fairly good. One of the young men, after graduation from middle school, abandoned further education and rushed to work to earn money for immediate enjoyment. He cannot get a good job because of his low education. On the other hand, the other young man has a farsighted idea. He went to university to study further and earned a MBA degree. As his qualification was high, he got a high position job with good salary, and joined the club of high society.

Of course, the destiny of these two men are different in the future due to their decision in the early days. One wanted to get small money quickly, but the other one planned to get big income later by more investment in his education. The result is that one is rich and the other is poor in their life.

## Walk Ten Thousand Miles

In ancient China, people said that to walk ten thousand miles was better than to read ten thousand books. Such exaggerated description was made by writers at that time. Of course, it is not true because we, in our whole life, are not able to read ten thousand books, and unable to walk ten thousand miles.

In fact, walking and reading are two different things. For human, we get knowledge from books, not from walking. That is why in ancient days, learned people could know the world clearly because of their diligent reading every day. In the old days, people had to travel either on foot or on horses. It was very tiring to do so, but they got more knowledge by travelling that way. They deeply experienced the places they visited, very much in detail.

Now, we travel by plane to any big cities we like, but we only see the cities on the surface. We cannot stay in one city too long. Of course, we can surely say that to read more books is better than to travel. We shall then have more interest in the place we travel to because we have already learned from books about the history of the place.

Nowadays, science is so advanced that we can sit at home and enjoy documentaries, which are filmed by scientists from many places, risking their lives to complete the documentaries.

## Kung Fu

When we see a person who knows how to practice Kung Fu, in a split second, we may start to admire him. But, thinking deeply, Kung Fu is not good in many ways. Why do we learn Kung Fu? It is because we want to protect ourselves in case somebody attack us. Such idea is not right. As long as we do not make troubles against other people, we are safe basically. Nobody will hurt us without reason.

Therefore, learning Kung Fu is entirely unnecessary and impractical, except for soldiers, they have to learn Kung Fu because they have to fight in battles. But for us ordinary people, it is not necessary to learn Kung Fu for defense. If you learn Kung Fu for a few years and in one occasion, you show your Kung Fu technics to fight against other people, you may get in trouble.

Unless you learn Kung Fu for exercise, it is of course no problem. But still, you must not spend too much time on Kung Fu. You must limit your aim to stretch your body and to promote good blood circulation.

Kung Fu is not easy to learn. Even when you spend a few years, you can just learn a little. Maybe you are so interested in Kung Fu and you spend ten years or more to learn it and become good at it, but you have to earn your living. The best you can do is to establish a Kung Fu school to earn money to live. But, Kung Fu teaching cannot bring you big income to improve your life and family to a very comfortable condition.

## Health and Wealth

When we reached middle age, we feel money and health are so important to us, without them we are in fear living during our older years. But, health and wealth will not come to us on their own. We have to find, to seek, to get them with hard work, plus some luck.

If we want good health, we have to live a proper life, sleep early, get up early, eat balancely, exercise regularly, and keep our emotion peacefully all the time. In such a life, we may have a good healthy body as we wished. But, on the contrary, if you live a crazy life, sleep late, fool around outside in the night, drink alcohol in the bar, go home late, eat food without control, no exercise, emotion out of control, you will surely be in bad health. You will look old even when you are only middle aged.

As far as wealth is concerned, we all know that to earn more, spending less is the way to accumulate wealth. If we can apply such way of life consistently, we will surely be rich one day.

Once we become rich, we must know how to invest money properly. To do this, we need wisdom and carefulness. High caution is to be exercised in our investment, upon which we can get big profit if we have luck, or a wrong investment may cast our wealth away without knowing why.

## Old People and Eating

If old people are to live a long life, first thing for them to observe is to eat less, not to put heavy burden on their stomach. It is a rule of nature that the stomach of old people is weak and unable to digest hard food.

Therefore, old people cannot eat expensive food, such as sharks fin, abalone, lobster, and so on. As those food are not only difficult to digest, but also too high in nutrition which will block the circulation of blood in blood vessel.

The most dangerous thing for old men is to eat beefsteak, which is good in taste but difficult to digest. Many old people, after eating steak at night, died in their sleep due to the fact that their stomach were unable to digest while they were sleeping. Also, some middle aged men who are successful in their business invited their fathers to a trip abroad. Of course hospitality was first class, and beefsteak was served in every dinner. But the consequence was that after they return from the trip, many old people died due to over exhaustion physically and also weakened stomach function.

It is almost a fact that if old people want to live long, they have to control their mouth. Middle aged men who got sick due to overeating have good chance to recover, but for old people, once they got sick, the chance of recovery is remote.

## Heart

Heart is the most important organ in our body. If other parts are hurt, we may still be alive, but if heart is hurt, we may die. Therefore, protecting our heart is the work between life and death, for which we can never neglect.

When we were born, our heart starts to work nonstop until the day of our death. Heart is very small, but it is the engine that circulates blood in our whole body, without which our body will become stiff, and that means death.

Heart works twenty four hours a day, never stopping, unlike the brain which can take a rest when we sleep, and unlike the stomach, which does not have to work if we do not eat. Heart is different, it works on and on every second.

We have two ways to protect our heart. One way is to avoid being hit by hard object. If we are not lucky and something hit our heart, we may die. But this is out of our control, so we have to leave our fate to God. Only by His mercy can we live to old age. Another way to protect our heart is by ourselves, which is to control our mouth, not to eat too much fatty food that can block our blood vessel.

Slowing down is also the way for us to live long. As we can see from the life of a turtle, which lives over one hundred years due to its slow heartbeat.

## Chinese Philosophers

We do not understand why so many famous Chinese philosophers were born during the Warring States period when China was divided into seven countries two thousand five hundred years ago. They were Confucius, Lao-Tzu, Mencius, Xun Zi, Mozi, Zhuangzi. They had different philosophy to teach people at that time, and each philosopher had many followers following their doctrine.

Of course, the most famous was Confucius, who even today is so popular to Chinese that even at Chinese communities overseas, there are many Confucius temples. Confucius taught people to follow: “Polite, promise, decent behavior, and to do no disgraceful thing.” That knowledge is very useful to our daily life. That is why Confucius philosophy can last few thousand years up to now.

Lao-Tzu’s philosophy is to do “nothing”, which actually means to do everything. On the other hand, he proposed that we should be weak on the outside, but strong on the inside to protect ourselves.

Mencius philosophy is that a man’s character was kind when he was born, but later changed to become evil by the circumstances in which he grew up.

Mozi’s philosophy is to work hard, and to enjoy less, to toil, but have less expectation from harvest. Such philosophy is good for poor young people to fight their life upwards.

Xun Zi’s philosophy is that the new generation must be better than the old generation. Now, the world has proved that the life of today is much better than the life of old.

Zhuangzi’s philosophy is that enjoying life is important because life is short. Many people in this world live their life in Zhuangzi’s philosophy now. To enjoy what they should enjoy tonight. Tomorrow is another day.

## Every Day Is the Last Day

This title means that if we live today as the last day of our life, we will surely treasure every second very much. We will be very kind to any person we meet and we will only do things which are very important to our life.

To say simply, we will never waste a minute if we live our last day. In our life, we feel so busy every day. It is because we mix important things and unimportant things together and as a consequence, we always feel so busy every day and time is never enough for our use.

Therefore, the actual meaning of last day is not to waste our time. We must seize the very moment, to do what we have to do, to enjoy what we like to enjoy. This is the aim of our life.

In fact, we should know how to live in the moment. Yesterday was gone, gone forever, will never be back, already history. Tomorrow is unknown; we never know what will happen to us tomorrow. Earthquake may strike in the middle of the night. A minute ago, we may be in a deep sleep in our bed, but a minute later, we may fall into the bottom of the abyss due to a sudden earthquake, which we shall not be able to resist.

So, enjoy our life now. Never waste a minute when it is in our hands. For twenty four hours we all spend on work, sleep, eating, rest, enjoyment or in whatever we like to do to live our last day well.

## Illness

We are human, born to this world, grow and die, which is natural and cannot reject. When we are ill, we go to see a doctor as a routine of our life.

In our life, we will surely have illness. For illness, there are two kinds, one from accident, hurting our body from the outside. Another is in the inside of our body, which, if we are careful, should be able to reduce the chance from happening.

We cannot stop accident, which is out of our control, but for inner illness, we have the power to control if we live a decent life. Inner illness is not so difficult to prevent provided we have ample sleep and eat balanced food. If we can control our mouth, we shall have little chance to get inner illness, but if we live a crazy life, sleeping late, eating irregularly, drink too much alcohol, all of these will cause us to be ill.

For small illness, we do not have to go to a doctor, especially with such illness as cold. In the Western proverb: “Feed cold empty fever.” which means that when we get cold, we just eat as much as possible and when we have fever, we must not eat anything, but drink water and sleep. In most cases, your own body’s immune system can recover from cold and fever very quickly. Therefore, do not go to a doctor and take medicine when little illness appear. Make a habit to cure small illness by yourself.

## Seize Knife Handle

To seize knife handle means to hold mastery in our life. If you have the ability to seize knife handle, you will not be hurt by other people. Many people will hurt you if you are defenseless.

We cannot detect other human's heart, which may hurt us if we are weak. Therefore, we must prepare all the time to protect ourselves and not to let others to have a chance to hurt us. As long as we do not hurt other people, it is our right to protect ourselves by any means.

Living a simple life is the way to protect ourselves. Only by simplicity shall we not have to ask others to help us too much. We shall try to live our life independently, keeping the knife handle in our own hands. If we live a complex life, we have to depend on others for many things, which means they are the ones who hold our knife handle. If the handle is in the hands of good people, it is not harmful to us, but should the handle be in the hands of bad people, we may live a miserable life under them.

Try to hold our knife handle in any matters whether big or small. There are so many examples which cannot be described in a few sentences. You must use your wisdom to judge things that come to your hands. You shall not hurt other people, but you have the right to protect yourself. Therefore, we shall try our best to seize knife handle so that we can live our life happily and freely forever.

## Exercise and Sleep

Exercise and sleep are closely connected. If there is no exercise, quality of sleep will not be so good. On the other hand, if there is not enough sleep, exercise is harmful to your body. Therefore, we must keep sleep and exercise in balance to get good result in our health.

Of course, there is big difference in exercise, between light exercise and heavy exercise. If a person wants to do heavy exercise, such as football, basketball, squash, judo etc., he needs a good night of sleep before he starts to do the exercise. For light exercise, such as tai chi, yoga, slow walk, ping pong, swimming etc. less sleep is no problem. Of course, you will feel a little tired during exercise due to lack of sleep.

For young people, sleep is not important to them. They can do any exercise even when short on sleep. A little rest afterwards will recover their fatigue very quickly because of their young age. But for middle aged men, caution is to be exercised during exercise if their sleep is not enough. They need good physical condition to support their exercise, otherwise they will have more chance to get hurt. Old men can never exercise if they do not sleep enough. Their energy is low, any exercise can make their body unbalanced, and can force them to fall down unknowingly. For old men, slow walk may be their best exercise.

## Disaster

All of us wish to live a peaceful life our whole life. We pray to God to protect us and to bless us to be away from disaster, but in our whole life, we may encounter disasters. Small one will give us pain, but big one will take our life away. Disaster is so difficult to prevent, we do not know where and when it will happen to us.

Just few days ago, there was a big disaster in Manchester, England. A bomb exploded in Manchester Arena, killing more than twenty people. This was perpetrated by a terrorist, who kill innocent people ruthlessly. It is really sad to the family of the dead who were so unlucky to be killed in such cruel way.

Sometimes we have disaster from nature. For instance, many year ago one village with a few thousand villagers lived at the foot of a big mountain. For centuries, they lived peacefully without any danger to them. But one day, huge rocks with floods roared down from the top of the mountain, killing all the villagers below. Such accident happened in a matter of minutes, we do not know beforehand to escape from the disaster.

Another kind is disaster created by human, such as air crash, train derailment, ocean liner sinking in the sea, car collision, etc. These are also not within our control, we cannot know beforehand.

What we can do is not to create disaster ourselves, such as not driving after drinking, not doing dangerous things and so on.

## Heaven and Hell

If somebody asks you: “Where is heaven? Where is hell?” You surely will be astonished by such abstract questions. It is because we have never been to heaven or hell.

However, if we think calmly and coolly, we may come to conclude that there is no heaven or hell in this world. It is only a castle in the sky, a shadow in the night, not something that exists in reality. In fact, heaven and hell is in our heart, depending on what we think about it. If we are happy, that is heaven in our heart, or if we are unhappy, that is hell in our heart.

We have to pursue happiness on our own, it will not come to us by itself. For instance, if we are polite and smile to others, they will also do the same to us. On the contrary, if we are always in rude manner and speak roughly to everybody, with such bad manner, how can other people be good to us? Therefore, we shall mire in unhappiness, which in a sense is hell.

There is an old Chinese saying: “There is a broad way to heaven, but you do not go. There is no door to hell, but you knock blindly.” That means a good young man should study and work hard diligently to lay a foundation for the future. That is the road to heaven. But if a young man is lazy, living his life in an indecent way, smoking, drinking, taking drugs, etc., such a person is doomed to hell.

## Time

Time is very fair. Whether you are as noble as a President of a nation, or you are a lowly peasant working in the street, you still get twenty four hours a day, not one minute more or one minute less. But, how to spend the twenty four hours depend entirely on you because you are the master of time.

Many people pay serious attention to money, but less care about time. It is because you have to earn money by labor, but not time, it comes naturally without paying any price. It is a gift from God as long as you are alive.

A person, whose success or failure in his lifetime, depend entirely on how he uses his time. If he is a man of wisdom, knows how to use his time wisely to his purpose, he is a successful man. But if he just lives an aimless life, wasting time blindly, he will achieve nothing when time goes by.

Obviously, if someone wants to borrow money from you, you will refuse. But if he asks you to do something for him by taking your time, you will do it willingly, because you feel that time has no cost.

It is a virtue to use your time to help people, but before doing it, you have to consider yourself first. Time is life, you must not give time away so generously.

## Who Are You

When you get up in the morning, you may look at the mirror and ask yourself, “Who are you?” This is a way to ask yourself what you are going to do today and how to use your time in a proper way. Of course, you will only plan good things for today, not evil things.

There is a proverb in England: “You cannot see the dust on your nose.” It means that you cannot see your own faults. It is true that you can see other’s faults easily, but to yourself, you know nothing about yourself. Greek philosopher Socrates said: “Know thyself”. Most of us know others very well, but we do not understand ourselves. A Chinese proverb also said: “To understand others is easy, to understand ourselves is difficult.”

Many people have high ideals in their thinking, but all of those ideals are castle in the air, not realistic. One Indian proverb also said: “You can have your ideas as high as the sky, but your feet must be on the ground”. That means you must live your life in realistic way.

Therefore, young people must have some preparation to face crisis that come unexpectedly. Try to do everything by yourself. Do not depend on other people to do things for you, even your parents. If you can ask yourself “who are you” every day, you will surely be a farsighted person.

## Persistence

The most difficult part for us is to do things persistently. To start is easy, but to persist is another thing, which is so difficult to fulfill as we wish. However, persistence is the word that built the foundation of our success in any field which we aim at. Nothing can be achieved if we do not persist.

There is a proverb in England: “A rolling stone gathers no moss.” If we wish to be a success, persistence is the weapon to attack our goal in front of us. To be persistent, we need to build a habit by which we can then go slowly into the door of persistence. We cannot catch fish for one day and lay the net idle for nine days. By doing so, how can we catch many fishes?

In real life, if we spend more time fooling around and less time working, we shall surely be a man of failure. God will not grace favorably on a person who is lazy. Therefore, if you think you are not a person who can persist, then it is better not to start, otherwise people will look lowly at you when you stop things halfway.

If you live a simple life, it is easier for you to do things persistently. Complicated life will lead you to be aimlessly busy, lacking of time every day. How can you keep things persistently when you do not have enough time?